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ABSTRACT
Today's classroom pupils are oriented toward content rather than independent study goals and, consequently, they will be unprepared to face the complex changes in society occurring during their lives. To rectify this deficiency, pupils need to learn the skills of discovery. Classrooms must become centers of intellectual ferment, with teachers providing "reference, related, and multimedia materials." The school librarian should serve as an instructional materials consultant to the teacher. As textbooks are phased out, additional money for a broad range of instructional materials will become available. Long range program budgeting, however, needs to include sufficient state and federal funds for additional materials and clerical help. With a shift from content learning to process learning, pupils can be released to become self-educating individuals. (JM)

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HAWAII SCHOOLS

in this issue . . . *Page*

Governor's Proclamation 2
Hawaii hosts historic gathering of educators 3
Carlos Romulo to address Opening Session 3
Message from James R. Squire, Executive Secretary, NCTE 4
C. Day-Lewis major speaker at Annual Banquet 5
Distinguished guests at the Annual NCTE Meeting 6
Why teachers make librarians cry 10
Linguistics, psychology, and the Hilo Language Project 12
The Hawaii English Project: Brave new venture 14
Media Notes 18
Let's release children to learn! 20
Task force on convention details 22
Year's first Keiki Concert 23
New experience-oriented reading program announced 24
Bookmobile Schedule 26

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Let's release children to learn!

By DEAL CROOKER

The self-educating individual—what is he? Why is he important? How can our present school system nurture such a learner? The author has some informative and practical answers. As former State Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Guidance, former President of Punahou School, and present Director of School and Library Services for Grolier International in the Pacific Area, Mr. Crooker speaks from a knowledgeable vantage point.

WE HAVE BUILT a curriculum penitentiary for our pupils! This intellectual prison is bounded by "content goals," the two walls of the textbook, and an instructional lockstep which impels pupils to react almost exclusively to the teacher's goal structure. In the face of all this we educators piously tell the classroom teacher to teach "independent study skills." Yet too often we fail to provide the physical or intellectual environment necessary to independent study. It is time we take a good hard look at the nature of today's society and evaluate our teaching practices in terms of the degree to which they will enable pupils to cope with this amazing world.

It is extremely sobering to realize that before they reach peak maturity today's children will experience greater technological, social, political and economic change than have all previous generations of man. Moreover, all the knowledge represented in our textbooks and curriculum "content goals" will comprise only twelve and one-half per cent of all the knowledge which will be in existence at the turn of the next century. As George Chaplain, editor of the *Honolulu Advertiser*, notes in an editorial on the dynamic nature of today's world: "It took man 200,000 years to move out of the Stone Age, but only forty to move from the Air Age to the Atomic Age, and just twelve to move from the Atomic Age to the Space Age."

Is it any wonder that some of our young people, unable to cope with such a complex society, become frustrated and bug out as "hippies," retreating by way of marijuana and psychedelic drugs! I am reminded of the confused individual in the New Yorker cartoon who pleaded, "Stop, World, I want to get off!"

IT IS MY firm conviction that we must move as rapidly as possible from an instructional program which stresses *content* to one which gives primary emphasis to *process*. Pupils must be released to learn! They must be released to experience the joy and emotional lift which comes from discovery—*on their own*. They must have continuous opportunity to learn the skills of discovery, and above all they must have rich opportunities to utilize their language arts skills in sharing their discoveries with their fellow students—not just for the intellectual enlightenment of their fellow students, but also to satisfy their own inner needs for recognition.

Dr. Lloyd Trump indicts present day education, stating:

> **Instead of providing for independent learning, school organization in most cases serves to chalk the students' steps clear across the educational stage . . . Instruction in each subject is cut and tailored until each unit fits a pattern designed for orderly administration. Directed and supported at virtually every step of the way through high school, too many students find it too difficult to travel on their own when they reach college or go to work on a job. Few high school graduates have achieved adequately the skill of independent study, nor has much happened to make them feel that they should. Students need opportunities to develop the inquiring mind. Today's instruction may even have the opposite effect.**

Dr. Harold Howe II, U.S. Commissioner of Education, points out the most important objective of eduucation is "to produce *self-educating individuals* motivated toward learning what becomes known all during their lifetimes, toward sharing knowledge among themselves and with other peoples of the world."

What we are saying here is that classrooms must become centers of intellectual ferment; teachers must become energizers and motivators of learners, knowledgeable in teaching the skills of discovery.

BUT WHEN we say "release pupils to learn" at the classroom level, we must ask ourselves a corollary question: release them to what? A textbook, a wall map, a dictionary, an encyclopedia ten to fifteen years old, a cast-off from the school library? It seems obvious that classroom teachers, organized in either grade or subject area groupings, need to sit down and think through the necessary instructional materials which should be right *where the action is* —in the classroom.

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Teachers will soon discover they should have *reference, related,* and *multimedia* materials—a rich gold mine of materials—if they are to implement a more modern program. For example, a classroom teacher presenting a unit on "Transportation," "Animals," or "The Westward Movement" should have from thirty to forty related titles, fiction and nonfiction, readily accessible to students for informational and recreational reading. In addition, students should have easy access to relevant films, sound tapes, and other forms of instructional materials.

Unfortunately, there is little in the training or experience of teachers which makes them knowledgeable in selecting instructional materials for their classrooms. The tremendous explosion of well written, scholarly, and beautifully illustrated books for young people has made it nearly impossible for even the most diligent teachers to keep abreast of the deluge. Increasingly teachers must utilize the school librarian as a consultant. A growing number of school librarians are becoming knowledgeable in utilization of print and nonprint media, so that they can recommend appropriate overhead projective materials, film strips, sound tapes, and film loops.

After teachers develop lists of necessary instructional materials, it becomes the responsibility of the principal to acquire them through intelligent long arnge program budgeting. Once acquired, these materials come under the overall purview of the school librarian. Serving as instructional materials consultant to teachers, controlling the flow of related and multimedia materials, the school librarian has her fingers on the curriculum and instructional pulse of the entire school. This is as it should be, for the school librarian is in the position to be the most knowledgeable person on the faculty in the teaching of discovery skills.

Educators are increasingly recognizing that the school library should not be thought of as a *place* but a *program*—a program which reaches out and enriches the intellectual environment of every classroom. The library *can* be, infact, what we sometimes rather wistfully call it: "The center of the instructional program."

A word on the funding of this program is essential. A substantial outlay needs to be made not only for materials, but for additional clerical assistance for librarians. They must be freed from time-consuming paper work in order to perform more important professional services. The necessary funds will come from tremendously expanded outlays of both state and federal monies carefully programmed for expenditure over a four to seven year period. Secondly, as textbooks are gradually phased out and supplanted by a broad range of instructional media, additional funds will be freed. It is safe to say that within five years in progressive schools, longer in others, the textbook will be relegated to a minor role as an instructional tool. It has done yeoman service for over 100 years when teachers were poorly trained and curriculum and administrative support almost non-existent.

WITH THE SHIFT from *content* to *process,* pupils must be released to form their own learning goals, to grow in independence. They will develop abiding interests and pursue them through rich classroom instructional materials under the general direction of an able guide to independent study skills. Pupils become independent learners through experiencing independence. Such a program will produce truly "self-educating individuals."

Commissioner Howe has further commented, "Only by ceaseless learning, investigation, and sharing can he (the American citizen) avoid slipping into obsolescence." Those of us responsible for administering programs of education should take heed of these words. Complacency in the face of obviously outmoded educational crystallizations in thinking and practice will insure pedagogical obsolescence. Education is the hope of America, and failure to keep it related to life may well sound the death knell of our nation.